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FBI Releases Files on Ruby-Oswald Probe

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The FBI questioned nearly 1,000 people in the weeks after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy but found no link between Lee Harvey Oswald and the man who silenced him, Jack Ruby.

FBI documents released yesterday by the National Archives indicate that the possibility of a conspiracy, in which Ruby was sent to kill the accused assassin, was exhaustively explored. The archives released 28 boxes of FBI documents as part of the government's operation to open the books on the Kennedy assassination.

The documents include a 1923 evaluation of "Jacob Rubenstein," as Ruby was known in his youth, describing him as "disobedient and quick-tempered"; Ruby's polygraph chart, indicating that he was probably telling the truth when he denied a conspiracy; and extensive photographs of the striptease acts at Ruby's Dallas nightclub.

More than any other single event, the shooting of Oswald by Ruby in the basement of the Dallas jail at 11:20 a.m. on November 24, 1963, two days after the Kennedy assassination, prompted public suspicion of a conspiracy.

Much of the material made available by the archive has already been open to the public at the FBI reading room. But portions of some documents previously omitted from the public record were included yesterday.

The documents describe efforts by FBI agents to run down numerous leads that purported to link Ruby to Oswald.

The absurdity of some of the leads did not deter the FBI from investigating. For example, a Roseville, Ohio, woman reported that during the singing of "Cowboy's Lament" on the Jimmy Dean television show, she heard a "message of instructions to Jack Ruby." The FBI's Cincinnati bureau tersely concluded that the woman "contributed nothing of value."

The FBI tried to learn whether Ruby had any ties to organized crime. But most of the documents indicate that he was a small-time operator who failed to cultivate the friendship of important crime or law-enforcement figures.

Ruby said he shot Oswald in a "moment of insanity." A polygraph test administered by the FBI in July 1964 indicated that he was telling the truth. But the FBI, noting Ruby's unstable mind, cautioned that the result must be viewed as "inconclusive."